BENJAMIN BANNEKER, ASTRONOMER. CALCULATOR OF ALMANACS.

" Show me a Negro who knows the Greek syntax, and I will concede that race a membership in the human family and entitled to freedom,-" Said John C. Calhoun once to David Lee Child while on a visit to Washington about the year 1833. Mr. Child who was the antislavery husband of that still more celebrated antislavery worker, Lydia Maria Child, was himself strongly against slavery, though not a Garrisonian abolitionist, and was felt to be safe and sane enough by the noted South Carolinian for serious converse on the subject, and he therefore gave the above as his deliberate judgment. Mr. Child on his way back to Boston dropped in at the New York antislavery office in company with his companion, Samuel E. Sewell, Esq., where he repeated to the secretary the conversarion had with Calhoun. The remarks were overheard by the Rev. Alexander Crummell, then an errand boy in the antislavery office and both from his voice and pen (See American Negro Academy, Occasional Papers No. 3 page 11) - they have long been a part of our stock of wisdom treasured from the lips of noted blacks. Dr. Crummell could never quite fathom the statesman's reason for choosing Greek instead of mathematics as the test for mental capacity and I recall the quizzical expression that always came over his face when he mentioned it. In the paper just cited the doctor even tried t-o meet Calhoun's slur about the supposed lack of knowledge of Greek on the part of colored men by reminding us that at that time there were no schools for colored youth for the study of Greek; and he was right as far as he went. But his mistake was made in assuming that the noted Southerner spoke from conviction rather than from policy. Mr. Calhoun was seeking an excuse and not a reason for belittling Negro intelligence, and thought that was the safest way. Having been all along a close and disciple of the writings of Thomas Jefferson, Calhoun knew too well about Benjamin Banneker and his mathematical achievements to make the latter subject the test for force of intellect. He therefore sought refuge behind the supposed intricacies of Greek rather than those of mathematics for the standard of human intelligence. But mere ignorance of a subject even with reference to the colored race was not always a valuable historical asset in Senator Calhoun's day, and often then as before the predictions of a sage however confidently made came back to vex his memory in after times. Such has been the case with John C. Calhoun and his confident assertion about the Negro and his mastery of Greek syntax. For at the very date of the Senator's bold utterance, there was evidence galore of colored men who knew their classics.

John B. Russwurm had already graduated in the classic from Bowdoin College in 1826, nearly ten years before this time, as may be seen elsewhere in this work; and Rev. John Chavis, the noted black teacher of leading North Carolinians was still teaching and preaching about Raleigh at the very time of this boast. But

better than all these was the epic Latin poem of Latino Juan the noted African professor of the classics at Granada, Spain about 1573, which that scholarly literateur, George Ticknor brought to America during the thirties. Latin John was not only teacher of both Greek and Latin but wrote both a grammar and poems in Latin which are also considered herein. Indeed this list might be indefinitely extended with the names of men who, about this time, or certainly long before the Seentor's death, were distinguished for their attainments in the classics, but probably he offered the assertion more as banter with the antislavery men, than as a test of a colored man's mental capacity. But whether John C. Calhoun knew of Benjamin Banneker's career or not, the life and intellectual achievements of this man present such excellent data for drawing inferences respecting the mental grasp of the colored race, that it is remarkable that more has not been said and written about him in the general body of American literature. The ancestry of Benjamin Banneker cannot be traced further than his grandparents and as even of these but little is known, that little might as well be given here as anywhere.

The first of the Bannekers in America was the son of an African Prince, who was captured, brought hither and sold as a slave to one Molly Welsh, an Englishwoman living a few miles out from Baltimore. Now Molly Welsh, who was said to have been a person of exceedingly fair complexion, though of moderate mental powers had reached America herself as an involuntary emigrant She belonged to that large number of early settlers in the older Southern colonies that had been sentenced to transportation on petty charges Molly had been a milk-maid at home and the charge against her was that of stealing a pail of milk, which really the cow had kicked over. She was nevertheless transported to Maryland, and sold for a term of seven years to a tobacco planter on the Potopsco River to defray the expense of her voyage. At the expiration of this term of service, Molly Welsh purchased the little farm paying only a nominal price for it . Needing assistance to till the land, she bought two slaves in 1692, one of whom was as above stated, Banneker. Unlike the other slave, this Banneker was proud and haughty decidedly disinclined to work. He never at any time forgot his royal lineage, and was in fact so hostile to slavery and his enforced servitude that he would not even embrace the christian religion. The enslaved prince was nevertheless a man of sound intelligence, and fine temper, with a very agreeable presence, dignified manners and contemplative habits. These qualities so endeared him to his owner that she in the course of time manumitted and married him. She also liberated the other slave. Of this marriage four children were born before the death of the father which took place in a very few years after the union; but both tradition and history are silent as to the time and cause of his death, or the movements of the family immediately afterwards. All that has

reached us further of the immediate family is that Mary, the oldest daughter, married in turn a slave; who had been purchased from a slave-ship by a planter living near the Banneker homestead. This slave had a very devotional turn of mind, and soon becoming a member of the Episcopal Church was baptized with the name of Robert, which event made him a free man. Immediately after his liberation and marriage to Marry Banneker, Robert the husband assumed the name of his wife; and it was of this union that Benjamin Banneker, the only son, though one of four children, was born on the 9th of November, 1731.

Neither the exact date of Robert Banneker's arrival in America nor that of his marriage has been preserved to us, though the date of Benjamin's birth on the 9th of November, 1731, would place the latter occurrence somewhere probably about the end of the preceding year. There is however record of the farm of one hundred acres which he purchased from Richard Gist on the 10th of March, 1737, and a family tradition handed down the report that this transaction took place seven years after his marriage. The name recorded in this land deal, for which he paid 17,000 pounds tobacco (the currency of that day) is spelled Banneky, a mistake probably of the recorder otf deeds. This farm was close to that of Robert's motherin-in-law there on the Potopsco River and was soon put under good cultivation, with house and other improvements. Two or three facts like the date of his own birth already mentioned and that of his father's death, which occurred on the 10th of July, 1759, have come to us from the family bible, recorded therein in the astronomer's own handwriting. But there are only a few instances of this the other facts about his life and achievements coming in the main from his relatives into whose possession his Bible and a few other effects went at the end of his career.

These relatives were the descendants of Benjamin Banneker's three sisters who in their marriages had become Mrs. Minta Black, Mrs. Molly Morton and Mrs. Henden, and the sons of some of these became ken of good standing. It was Greenbury Morton, a son of the second named sister, who gained great distinction for a speech delivered on election day in 1809, against disfranchisement. Prior to that year, free colored men, possessing a certain property qualitification voted like other men in Maryland. The law was now (1809) changed so as to restrict the suffrage to free white males. Morton was not aware of the change until he went to the polls to vite. When however he found out the real purport of the new law, it is said that he addressed the crowd in such a strain of true and passionate eloquence that it held the audience assembled for the election in breathless attention while he spoke." Doubtless it was the mother of this nephew, and a sister of Banneker whom Latrobe has confounded with the latter's mother when speaking of her vigor and activity in advanced years. (See Latrobe's Banneker, page 6) But another nephew, John Henden who after a long life of usefulness was still living in 1836, proved of far more service to the name of

Banneker . He it was who furnished many of the facts about the life of his distinguished uncle, having an old man's fondness for regaling contemporaries out of a past stored with rich recollections, and it is largely to there that we are indebted for the incidents in the life of Benjamin Banneker. According to penden, Banneker's bright mind made him a general favorite with his grandmother who found much pleasure in imparting to him all her small stock of knowledge in the department of letters. She had set her heart upon giving a religious turn to his mind and training and found unwonted delight in having him read to her from the large Bible which she had imported from England. After having thus learned to read, our subject spent some time at a small neighborhood school where a few White and two or three colored children were instructed. In this school he advanced to double proportion in arithmetic before finally laying aside books for farm duties. Another man, Jacob Hall, who was one of these pupils, and also blessed with a long life, was intimately acqusinted with banneker, and talked much of the astronomer's early life. According to Hall, Banneker was never fond of play even as a boy, or any other amusement; " all his delight was to dive into books." But Banneker's school opportunities were not large and such as he had were of short duration. The school was only open during the winter season and there was no particular reason, or precedent, for continuing a colored lad at school in that section in those days after he had grown large enough to work. His love of study did not end with his school days however; he still continued to devote his every opportunity to rea ing. Both as a lad and a young man, he continued at the family homestead employing his time farming during the agricultural season, and giving his oda moments to books.

In spite, however, of his love for books Banneker became a good farmer under the guidance of his father, and was equally industrious in the field as in his study. He had reached his 28th year at the time of his father's death in 1759, and by the laws of primogeniture was made joint-heir with his mother of the old homestead and 72 of the 100 acre farm, the remaining 28 acres going to his three sisters. On this farm he became an expert farmer in after years, with a fine garden laid out and planted with a splendid assortment of fruit trees. He kept two horses and several cows n and a large number of hives of bees, of which he was a very fond and skilful meneger. Thus employed with his various farm interests, he had but a little time left for study, and that was during three short months of winter, but as we shall see, he utilized these to great advantage. On this farm banneker may be said to have passed the rest of his long life without ever being distant, or long from the place. He had always been an acute observer of everything that he saw or which took place around him in the natural world, and he eagerly sought information from all sources of what was going forward in society. Thus he became gradually possessed of a large fund of general knowledge such as it was diffi-

cult to find in those who had been better off by opportunity and circumstances than he was. At first his information was a subject of remark and wonder of his illiterate neighbors only; but eventually his reputation spread through wider circles; and Benjamin Banneker, still a young man, came to be regarded as one who could not only solve the intricate problems in mental arithmetic with ease, but exercise a sound and discriminating judgment upon men and things. Even before his 25th year (1753) Banneker had contrived and made a wooden clock which greatly increased his reputation by the excellence of its time-keeping. He had never seen a clock but he had seen a witch, and it was upon the latter he modeled his time-piece. The making of the clock proved no easy feat, for our young artist, for he found it difficult to make the several hands correspond in time and motions. But he nevertheless succeeded and this clock said to be first, every part was made in America raised his fame all the higher among his neighbors. Among those whom the fame of the wooden time-piece attracted to Banneker were the members of the Ellicott family who had moved into the neighborhood about 1772. They were Quakers, and as was always true of their sect soon became close friends of the colored man. They found him a young bachelor living alone with his mother, with sisters married and dqelling nearby

The district was at that time a wild, almost unbroken wilderness, where amid the thick forests, the howl of the wolf and the cry of the panther and the wild cat, were nightly heard. Not the sound of an axe or the ring of a hammer had ever been heard where the Ellicotts finally settled until they began to build what was the first flour mill in Maryland! There and all around the Banneker homestead roamed the wild deer, turkey and other game. The workmen who were employed to erect the mill were glad enough to be accommodated by the Bannekers. They were especially delighted to have the privilege of being supplied with provisions from the Banneker farm. His mother, Mary Banneker, attended to the marketing, bringing for sale poultry, vegetables, fruit and honey. Even at an advanced age, the mother of Banneker was a woman of uncommon strength of body and mind. She had a knowledge of the medicinal properties of the herbs, which often stood her in good stead with her neighbors, and such was her vigor of body that even at 70 years she could easily run down and prepare her chickens for the market. She was always conspicuous for her Indian copper complexion and long black hair which even at death was unstreaked with gray.

The coming of the Ellicotts, a family, every one of whose members were actuated with enlarged and liberal views proved most fortunate for Banneker. Their mill at first a novelty came in time to be the centre of what is now Ellicott City, and together with the little store and the post office later on added, was finally the clearing-house for community gossip and conversation. Banneker was a frequent visitor; the young brother of the

millers, George Ellicott, who was himself a surveyor and an accomplished mathmatician, was especially drawn to the colored genius through kindred taste. There in time Banneker came to lay aside his usual reserve and his conversational power shone to great advantage. On such occasions he poured forth a stream of eloquence out of his volumes of traditional lore, of anecdotes about the early settlers and their methods of cultivating the soil, and adding ever and anon a note or two about his own experience and laborious pursuits of knowledge in his earlier days. George Ellicott talked much with his colored neighbor on astronomy, both lending him books and encouraging him to persist in his studies. Among some of the books lent our subject by his good neighbor about 1787, were Mayer's Tables, Derbuson's Astronomy and Leadbeater's Lunar Tables. Along with these were also some astronomical instruemhts. Mr. Ellicott being by accident prevented from explaining the use of the instruments or the nature of the books at the time, called after a short time to do so but was completely surprized to find that Banneker had not only mastered the use of the instruments but also understood the works on astronomy. Such was the lightening grasp of his mind that the riddle of the star-land unfolded itself to him almost in an instantaneous flash. From this time the study of astronomy became the chief aim of his life. In its pursuit he almost disappeared from sight for a season: He was now living alone, though his married sisters who resided nearby dropt regularly in after the death of their mother to look after his housework . Banneker was still compelled to earn his daily bread, but by carefully contracting his wants he made little serve him, and at the same time enlarged his leisure for study. Night was of course his favorite time to contemplate the motion of the stars, by reading their stories and working out their tracks through the heavens.

Having been repeatedly urged to undertake the calculation of almanacs, our astronomer submitted to his friend George Ellicott during the Spring of 1789 his first projection of an eclipse. It contained a trifling error which his friend promptly pointed out. This gave Banneker the chance to show how thoroughly he had mastered the works on astronomy lent him by this same friend, which he hastened ably to do in one of his two letters preserved.

It was about this time that Banneker received what was probably the greatest compliment ever paid him during his lifetime in the invitation to accompany and assist the commission to lay out the District of Columbia. Maj. Andrew Ellicott who was appointed by President George Washington in 1790 to take the place of Maj. Pierre L'Enfant, the original surveyor was at the head of the work. This Ellicott commission not only rerun the lines of the Federal territory but surveyed and located the sites of the present national capitol, the White House, the Treasury and other public buildings. In all this work, Benjamin Banneker was the assistant, and his deportment on this occasion greatly raised him

in the estimation of all he met. The commissioners especially who knew his attainments showed him much consideration. His quickness in solving the intricate problems made him such a favorite that they forgot even in that day and place the color of his skin and invited him to a seat at their own table and as he with characteristic modesty declined their courtesy, they had his table set nearby here the conversation and discussions about the work could shared by all The respect showed him by the distinguished men on this occasion made a deep impression upon Banneker's mind. On his return he called to give an account of his experience, at the house of one of his friends. He reached home on horseback, dressed in his usual costume,- a full suit of drab cloth, surmounted by a broad brimmed beaver hat. He seemed to have been reanimated by the presence of the eminent men with whom he had mingled in the District and gave a full account of their proceedings. With his usual modesty he set little value on the services he had rendered but was greatly rejoiced for the achievement, at least, of having been able to refuse wine when it was served to the party, adding " I feared to trust myself even with wine, lest it should steal away the little sense I have." This declaration on the part of our author was most gratifying to his friends, as he had not always been able to make it. In fact much after the custom of his day he had known excesses in stimulants in his earlier days, but he by this time conquered the habit through the control of his own will; and his example in this is hardly less commendable to those of this day who are similarly afflicted, than is his triumpy in astronomy.

And we ought not to omit mentioning at this juncture the part played by another colored man in erecting the National Capitol; especially in connection with the colossal statue of Liberty which surmounts that huge pile. When about 1857 Artist Crawford submitted his great liberty statue, the goddess wore the famous liberty cap which had played a more or less conspicuous symbolic part in American history, Jeffe son Davis then at the head of the War Department objected to the cap. " This" said he " will never do." We Americans have patronized this absurb Liberty Cap too long already. It was the detestable head-gear adopted by the freed slaves of Rome, let us put it out of our sight! " The Southerners being more or less in control of national affairs at the time Davis' opinion went. The designer removed the cap from his figure and bound about the goddess' temples instead the feathered head-gear of the Indians. The figure having been stripped of all suggestion of freed slaves in accordance with Davis' notion, was handed over th Clarke Mills for casting in his foundry at Bladenburg. But the foremen of the shop convinced that there was none to take his place struck at this juncture for an advance from eight to ten dollars per day in salary. The proprietor of the foundry resenting the foreman's attitude dismissed him and called for a volunteer from among the men to take his place. The entire force halted or declined until a stalwart black man long in the service

stepped out and was immediately placed in charge to complete the casting of the Statue of Liberty. This great symbol of freedom which he finished was set in place at the top of the Capitol Building in 1863, the very year that witnessed the liberation of his entire race.' Thus not only did banneker, the black mathmatician, whose work established the mental capacity of his race, aid in laying out the nation's capital but the brains of another black, as if marked by destiny (Sic volvere parcas) finished the crowning piece of the national temple which when put in place, symbolized with others the liberty of his own race! The very sensitiveness, and haggling of Jefferson Davis over the figure had served to delay the completion of this symbol of liberty until the nation's freedom itself had been completed! (New York Tribune's Century of the Capitol, Sept. 17,1893)

By this time our author had corrected the errors pointed out in the projection of the eclipse; he had in fact calculated an almanac for 1791; but the first work of his in this line to reach the public eye, was the almanac for 1792, a manuscript copy of which together with his celebrated letter, he sent to Sec. of State Thomas Jefferson on the 19th of August 1791. This was a tremendous undertaking. Of the labor of the work, few of those can form any estimate who would at this day commence such a task, with all the assistance afforded by accurate tables and well digested rules. Banneker had no such aid; and it is a well attested fact, that he commenced and had advanced far in preparation of the logarithms necessary for his purpose before receiving the books from Mr. George Ellicott.. Banneker chose to sent his work and letter to Mr. Jefferson rather than to President Washington probably because of the former's opinion expressed in the celebrated " Notes of Virginia" published only a few years before. For the letter while of considerable length deals almost entirely with those phases of discussion which would enable him to " controvert the long established illiberal prejudice against the blacks." Quite three fourths of the letter are devoted to this subject. For both the letter and Almanac Jefferson hastened to thank Banneker after this manner:

Philadelphia, Aug. 30, 1791.

Sir:-

I thank you sincerely for your letter of the 19th instant and for the almanac it contained. Nobody wishes more than I do to see such proofs as you exhibit, that nature has given to our black brethren talents equal to those of the other colors of men, and that the appearance of a want of them is owing ibly to the degraded condition of their existence both in Africa, and America. I can add with truth that no one wishes more ardently to see a good system commenced for raising the condition both of their body and mind to what it ought to be, as fast as the imbecility of their present existence and other circumstances which cannot be neglected will admit. I have taken the liberty of sending your almanac to Monsieur de Condorcet, secretary of the Academy of Science at Paris,

and members of the Philanthropic Society; because I considered it a document to which your whole color had a right for their justification against the doubts which have been entertained of them.

I am with great esteem, sir,

Your most obedient servant

Thomas Jefferson

Mr. Benjamin Banneker, near Ellicott's
Lower Mills, Baltimore Co.

Banneker continued to publish his almanac until 1802, exactly ten years and a folio collection of it in manuscript is still in existence for the entire period. The handwriting, with calculation clearly copied is good, and remarkably distinct, having a practised look, with an old man's aim at clearness rather than at ostentation. Beside the almanacs and letters, our author has left us a common place book in which he kept a record not only of his small business transactions but of his philosophical reflections as well. In strange juxta-position are to be found domestic entries such as " 13th of April, 1803, planted peas and sowed cab- " bage seed," or " 12th of December, 1797 bought a pound of can- " dles at 1S. 8D " with such deeper and more dignified observations as these: " Our distilled spirits are like unto the water of the " river of Phrygia, which if drunk sparingly purges the brains and cures madness, but otherwise it inflects the brains and creates " madness." Or " 23rd of Dec., 1790, About 3 O'clock A. M. I " heard a sound and felt the shock like unto heavy thunder I went " out, but could not observe any cloud above the horizon. I there- " fore concluded it must be a great earthquake in some quarter of " the globe." These apparent incongruities are probably the result of the scarcity of paper at that day and were also probably made with no view of ever being published rather than any lack of orderliness on the writer's mind.

The common place book from which these observations are taken was, together with the complete manuscript copy of all his astronomical calculations sent to his friend George Ellicott upon the death of the astronomer, and through the latter's descendants have now been safely deposited in the Maryland Historical Society. Banneker himself was never married but lived as already stated, alone with his mother during her life. She was much attached to her son, and even to her latest day watched over him with scarcely less maternal care than when he was an infant at the breast. Our author was in his 59th year on the appearance of his first almanac, and the demands made upon his time by this new venture, rendered it necessary that some method be devised to increase his leisure for study. He had hitherto done his own farming. To secure this increased leisure he divided his farm up into small tenements, and upon the rent from these hoped to derive sufficient means for his own immediate wants. But the collection of his rents proved a continual source of annoyance and trouble. The tenants

quarrelled with him; they refused to pay him, and when he insisted on payment they would so otherwise vex him that concluding " it " was better to die of hunger than of anger" he determined to sell his land for an annuity. Banneker therefore made a careful calculation of the chance of his life with such data as he could obtain, and sold his place to the Ellicott family on his own terms. The deed conveying the land was recorded on the 10th of March, 1799 and purported to convey 72 acres of a tract of land called " stout" for the sum of 180 pounds in Maryland currency. But from entries made in his common place book we learb that the sale had been made long before, and that the yearly annuity was 12 poun of the same currency. It is said that this was the only false calculation Banneker ever made, since he lived eight years longer than he had reckoned possible. The Ellicotts continued his annuity as long as he lived, however, and he kept the homestead and a small patch of ground upon which he gardened for his own use and exercise till the end.

The situation of the astronomer's dwelling was one which would be admired by every lover of nature. Aside from furnishing a fine field for the observation of celestial phenomena, it commanded a splendid prospect of the near and distant hills of the Potpsco River which have always been celebrated for their picturesqu beauty. A never-failing spring gushed forth from beneath a large golden willow tree in the midst of his orchard, and large chestnet trees lent their grateful shade during the summer season. Here in all seasons, Summer and Winter, from this natural observatory, he was wont to

" Go forth under the open sky, and list
To nature's teachings"-

nightly exploring the heavens for new wonders or watching the fulfillment of the laws of his own ingenuity had marked out for the starry host. Their story had been his only solace as he descended into the vale of years, and Oh, what is worse, his sorrow too; for the constant exposure on winter nights finally began to undermine his health. And these added to the infirmaties natural to old age utterly impaired his health. He continued his investigations, however, at every opportunity, jotting down whatever was worth while in the common place book,- his last entry being simply " Benjamin Banneker, 1805." It was out on one of these little tours of celestial inspection that the dread summon came to him in the autumn of 1806. It was on a Sinday morning Oct. 9th, that he strolled forth to enjoy the mellow autumn air, the sunshine, and distant prospect that opened to his view, and it proved his last look upon them. He met and conversed pleasantly with a friend for a while on the way, when suddenly complaining of feeling ill, they immediately returned to his cottage. The aged astronomer laid himself upon his couch and sank rapidly into unconsciousness. The following mention of his death appeared on the 28th of October, 1806, in the " Federal Gazette and Baltimore Daily Advertiser."

" On Sunday

" On Sunday, the 9th instant, departed this life at his resi-
" dence in Baltimore County, Mr. Benjamin Banneker, a black man
" and immediate descendant of an African father. He was well-known
" in his neighborhood for his quiet and peaceful demeanor, and
" among scientific men, as an astronemer and mathmatician. IN early
" life he was instructed in the most common rules of arithmetic and
" thereafter, with the assistance of different authors he was en-
" abled to acquire a perfect knowledge of all the higher branches of
" learning. Mr. Banneker was the calculator of several almanacs
" publisjed in this as well as several of the neighboring States;
" and although of late years none of his almanacs have been pub-
" lished, yet he never failed to calculate one every year, and left
" them among his papers. Preferring solitude to mixing with soci-
" ety he devoted the greater part of his time to reading and con-
" templation, and to no book was he more attached than the scrip-
" tures. At his death he bequeathed all his astronomical and
" philosophical books and papers to a friend, Mr. Banneker is a
" prominent instance to prove that a descendant of Africa is sus-
" ceptible of as great mental improvement and deep knowledge of the
" mysteries of nature as that of any other nation."

(See file of this paper in Boston
Public Library)

The facts which furnish the foundation for this life of Banneker have reached us mainly from the two collateral sources in the Ellicott family. Those upon which John H. B. Latrobe drew for his sketch of the astronomer in 1845, had been collected by Mt. Benja-
" min H. Ellicott of Baltimore, while the J. S. Norris life which like the foregoing was read before the Maryland Historical Society (in 1854) though some ten years afterwards, was the work of Mrs. Martha Tyson the daughter of Mr. George Ellicott, the closest friend of our author. Mrs. Tyson's notes on Banneker were put forth more completely by her own daughter, Anna Kirk, in a booklet in 1884. Both sides wrote from personal acquaintance with the men, besides drawing on others who also had a similar knowledge. We may therefore assume that most of the interesting facts about Banneker have been preserved.

Banneker, besides, enjoyed not a little contemporary fame; he was mentioned by Blumanbach and Imlay almost from the first, and an excellent account of him was published in the American Museum in 1792. Beside these there were antislavery mentions of him galore, while in the latest we have the excellent brochure of Richard T. Greener of New York. Nor ought we to pass over the Conway life which appeared in the Atlantic monthly in 1863, a work highly sympathetic, and appreciative of genuine merit In fact Banneker occupied quite enough of public attention in his own day, to make it worth while to publish at least one edition of his, and the letter from Jefferson, in pamphlet form in 1792, only a few months after they were first written, and this act together with other evidence of his forsight and prudence herein mentioned all

the more attest his business turn of mind. This small octavo pamphlet with its dozen pages is entitled:

" The Letters between Benjamin Banneker and
" The Letters between Benjamin Banneker and Thomas Jefferson
Philadelphia:
Printed and sold by Daniel Lawrence,
53 North Fourth Street, near Race,
MDCCXCII
(1792)

A copy of this pamphlet is yet preserved in the Lenox Library in New York city, and is together with the copies of the almanac and scrap book apart from the two or three short missives usually included in his life - all that remains of Banneker.

During a previous sick spell Banneker had given to one sister the family Bible and the other his feather bed; while to his friend George Ellicott he devised that the books borrowed of him together with an oval table, the common place book and the complete manuscript copy of all his almanacs should be delivered immediately upon his death. It was religious observance of these injunctions that both announce to the world the death of Banneker, and saved for it the only relics of his which reached our day. All else in the way of correspondence and writings perished in the mysterious fire which enveloped the Banneker homestead at the very hour of his burial on his favorite hill-side but a few hundred feet away. When it is recalled that there had been much correspondence between our author and the noted Philadelphians Divid Rittenhouse, and Dr. Rush and other leaders of the time, we may see at a glance what a loss was sustained in the burning of that little hut on that October day. And too, we ought to pause long enough yere to note the difference in portions of fame which

" Envy's snares and fortune's freaks unkind"

has meted out to these men, particularly Rittenhouse and Banneker! For though the chief attainments of the former like those of our subject arose from his building of a clock, his accuracy in surveying and general proficiency in astronomy, Rittenhouse yet occupies a prominent place in the history of American astronomy, while Banneker lies mainly unsung save in a minor key.

But most interesting of all is the personal description of our author by each of these original biographers. From the Latrobe life we clip the following letter by a life-lone acquaintene

" When I was a boy, I became very much interested in him (Ban-
" neker) as his manners were those of a perfect gentleman: kind,
" generous, hospitable, humane, dignified and pleasing, abounding
in information on wll the various subjects and incidents of the
" day; very modest and unassuming, and delighting in society at
" his own house. I have seen him frequently. His head was cover-
" ed with a thick suit of white hair, which gave him a very venera-
" ble and dignified appearance. His dreww was uniformly of super-
fine drab broadclothmade in the old style of a plain coat, with

" straight collar and long waistcoat, and a broad brimmed hat. His color was not yet black but decidedly negro. In size and per- " sonal appearance, the statue of Franklin at the Library in Phil- " adelphia, as seen from the street, is a perfect likeness of him. " Whenever I have seen it, it has always reminded me of Banneker. " Go to his house when you would, either by day or night, there " was constantly standing in the middle of the floor a large table " covered with books and papers. As he was an eminent mathmati- " cian, he was constantly in correspondence with other mathmatics " in this country, with whom there was in interchange of questions " of difficult solution."

From Mrs. TYson who was a daughter of George Ellicott, Banneker's closest friend, and who had seen the astronomer many times herself we learn that:

" In personal appearance Banneker had a most thoughtful and " dignified expression. A fine head of white hair surmounted his " unusually broad and amply forehead, whilst the lower part of his " face was slender and sloping towards the chin. His figure was " perfectly erect, showing no inclination to stoop as he advanced " in years. His raiment was always scrupulously neat; that for " summer wear, being of unbleached linen was beautifully washed and " ironed by his sisters, Minta Black and Molly Morton, who we have " seen lived near him and after his domestic affairs. In cold " weather he dressed in light colored cloth, a fine drab broad- " cloth constituting his attire when he designed appeared in his " best style."

As already stated, Banneker was never married. He was a great lover of retirement, and had a wonderfully mild and philosophical disposition. His equilibrium was seldom disturbed by the petty jealousies, and inequalities of temper of the ignorant people, with whom his situation obliged him to come in contact. His noble bearing and amiable looks, and the pleasure he always found in the visits fromfriends were the constant theme of all who knew him. The story about the boys of the community who persisted in violating the provacy of his orchard is a case in point. The boys knowing the particular quality of his cherries and pears, would call and ask permission to take some fruit, and, permitted, would take a little and retire; but no sooner than the old astronomer got again immersed in his calculation, they would return and strip his trees. Even an offer to give them half, provided they would leave unmolested the remainder had no effect upon them. Whereat the astronomer regretting to a friend that he had no fruit to offer him, " I have no incluence with the rising generation. All my " arguments have failed to induce them to set bounds to their wants But Banneker's genius and the nature of his contemplations rendered him in a great measure superior to such perplexities; the pacific principles he admired taught him forbearance and the forgiveness of those little injuries which after all are occasional from moral

lapses rather than from intent to wrong one. Although Banneker said in his letter to Thomas Jefferson, " I am of the African race " and in that color which is natural to them of the deepest dye," it is the almost unanimous opinion of all those who saw and knew him that he was not yet black but moreof a reddish-brown in complexion.